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Each of the 3 basic units--elementary, secondary, college--of the American educational system was originally intended to be terminal. The knowledge explosion and growing demands of technological society, however, have made graduate and higher professional education necessary for increasing numbers of citizens. As a result, the nation is deprived of the services of these students for 2 more years and greater financial, social, and psychological burdens are created for the students and their parents. A program that would enable gifted youth to achieve their professional and vocational goals 2 years earlier is the 1-8-1-8 Plan being initiated by St. Louis University and 6 area high schools in September 1968. It allows students to save 1 year of the first 8 years and 1 year of the second 8 while moving through the program with the same peer group. Students will be able to take regular college level courses in high school and receive as many as 25 college credits for them which are held in escrow by the University. They will thus be able to complete a BA within 3 years and proceed to graduate school, if they wish. Approximately 120 7th grade students will be chosen from public and private elementary schools for entrance into the participating high schools in September 1969. All of the students will be selected from the top quartile of the Scholastic Testing Service High School Placement Tests. This model can be adopted in any urban area where there is at least 1 strong university and 1 or more school systems willing to cooperate on an individual or system-wide basis. (JS)

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THE 1-8-1-8 PLAN

A PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE SHEEPSKIN CURTAIN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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THE 1-8-1-8 PLAN

> Until the end of World War II, the secondary schools and the colleges were two different worlds. In Charles R. Keller's phrase, a sheepskin curtain had rung down between them. Since the end of the war, and increasingly in the last decade, this curtain has been riddled by shots from all directions. Today the schools and the colleges are working together more closely than at any other period during the century.[1]

The following is a proposal, not to riddle, but to raise the sheepskin curtain.

Historical Accretions

The American educational system has grown by historical accretion. While modifications and improvements have been made within the framework of the present structure, our system consists of three basic units, each of which was originally intended to provide terminal education for those pursuing it. Thus the eight year elementary school was thought to be terminal in a nation which realized the need of literacy and of basic skills for all citizens of a democracy. The secondary school became a realizable ideal at a later stage in our history, but this four year unit was simply added on to the eight year elementary school with consequent duplication of content and effort. In a similar fashion, the four year college was added to a terminal secondary program with further duplication of content and effort. The four year college for the most part was originally thought of as terminal. However, the explosive development of human knowledge and the increasing complexity of our technological society have created pressures that are making graduate and higher professional education a necessity for increasing numbers of our best qualified citizens.[2]

The present American educational system, with this needless repetition and duplication of effort, is wasteful and time-consuming for many. The growing need for increasingly longer periods of education creates ever greater burdens (financial, psychological, social, etc.) for our most gifted young people and their parents. As a result, by needlessly prolonging the education of our youth, our nation is really depriving itself of their services for two or more years of their useful life span.

Model for Urban Areas

Clearly, then, a workable plan to provide better articulation of elementary, secondary, and higher education would benefit a substantial percentage of our gifted youth by enabling them to achieve their vocational goal at an earlier age. It would assist parents by enabling their sons and daughters to achieve financial independence earlier. It would aid taxpayers, who would have to provide fewer years of schooling for these young people. Finally, it would benefit the nation by making gifted young citizens available to exercise their chosen vocation earlier than formerly, and thus contribute to the welfare of their fellow men over a longer professional life span.

Many of the elements of this program have been tried separately and have proved effective. What is new in the program is the configuration of elements. This plan provides a model which can be imitated in any urban area where there is at least one strong university and one or more school systems willing to cooperate on an individual school or system-wide basis.

Peer Group Progress

The plan will result in the saving of one year of the first eight years of school and one year of the second eight, (a time saving of 12%). This would be achieved by eliminating needless repetition of content at the elementary and secondary levels, and in secondary and higher education. Students pursuing this program will be able to complete a bachelor's degree at nineteen or twenty, and if they wish, to proceed to graduate or professional school two years earlier than they would in the present system. Moreover, these students would move through the program with the same peer group during precisely those years in which peer group identity is most important for total personality development.

The program is briefly described below. The project involves Saint Louis University and six local high schools which have already agreed to participate. Additional high schools of the St. Louis area, both public and private are being invited to join. A team of psychologists and other behavioral scientists will be involved in the identification, screening, testing, and evaluation phases of the program.

During the winter and early spring of 1968-69, a pilot group of approximately one hundred students will be identified from the 7th grade of local public and private elementary schools for entrance into the participating high schools in September, 1969. They will join a new peer group as they normally would on entering high school. Since it is estimated that students in the top quartile of the Scholastic Testing Service High School Placement Tests are capable of pursuing the program successfully, all of these students will be from this group. They will remain the full four years in high school and consequently they will have the same opportunities

as their peers to gain leadership experience through class and extra-curricular activities. A special further opportunity is planned for the summer following junior year when the students will spend a "Summer in America," a six-to-eight week bus tour to reinforce their recently acquired knowledge of American history and geography and acquaint them first hand with various aspects of American life: social, economic, political, literary and cultural.

Credits in Escrow

During the four years of high school they will participate in the Advance College Credit Program of the 1818 Plan. This cooperative program between Saint Louis University and these participating high schools of the metropolitan area enables students to pursue in their own high schools and under their own faculty (approved by the University) regular college level courses. Examinations are set and graded by the appropriate University department and students successfully completing the courses receive college credit which is held in escrow by the University. This program, proved effective over the past eight years in conjunction with three of the current six participating schools, differs from the nationally known Advanced Placement program in that credit is guaranteed and does not depend on differential standards applied by various departments in various colleges nor upon student performance in a single examination. Presently, the program is operative in English and Modern Languages, but plans allow for its extension into other fields common to high school and college such as mathematics, history, speech, physics, chemistry, biology, classical languages, and economics. All students in this program have access to the University library on the same basis as regular University students.

By the time the student in this program finishes four years of high school he will have had the opportunity to complete as many as twenty-five credits in those courses which he would normally take in college. He will normally move onto the university level with almost one full year of college credits and should complete his bachelor's degree with ease in three academic years. To insure a smooth transition into near-sophomore college work after the four years of high school, students will be strongly encouraged during the third and fourth years of high school to project their career plans realistically, as is normally done in freshman and sophomore year in college.

It should be noted that this program is not based on acceleration (going to school in the summer) which reduces considerably the earning potential of the student. Fundamentally, the program provides for reaping the benefits of improved articulation among the three levels of education. The program provides a model that is basically imitable in most metropolitan areas. The academic, personal, and financial implications of the program extend to students, their parents, teachers, and administrators, to school systems public and private, local and state, to legislatures, and finally to the national talent pool.

Pace of Ability vs. Pace of History

The 1818 Plan allows the potential leader of tomorrow to move into his societal role at a pace imposed by his own talent rather than one imposed by an outmoded, poorly articulated system of education fashioned by historical accident. The hope is that as the program expands, both in numbers of students and schools, it will provide a new direction for American education: a full articulation of all levels of education.

Revised July, 1968

FOOTNOTES

[1]Edwin Fenton, "Honors Programs in the Secondary Schools," The Superior Student in American Higher Education New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966. Page 247.

[2]Several studies of recent graduating classes of the College of Arts and Sciences at Saint Louis University indicate that about 80% or 85% of the male graduates go on to graduate or professional school. The studies showed 77% for the 1960 class, and 86% for the 1964 class. For female students the figure appears to be about 65%.